

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

news release

For Release January 16, 1981

Inez Connor 202/343-5634

## ANDRUS APPROVES INCREASED FLOW IN TRINITY BELOW LEWISTON DAM TO AID DEPLETED SALMON

Acting to reverse the serious decline in salmon and steelhead in California's Klamath/Trinity area, Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus today announced a permanent increase in the water flow in the Trinity River to a major spawning and rearing area below Lewiston Dam.

Last spring, Andrus temporarily increased the flow from 120,500 acre-feet annually to 287,000. This will now become permanent and will be gradually increased to 340,000 acre-feet in normal years as streambed improvements and watershed rehabilitation are accomplished. In dry years, the flow will be reduced to 220,000 acre-feet and to 140,000 in critically dry years.

Chinook runs have dropped by 80 percent and steelhead by 60 percent since the Trinity River Division water project was completed in 1964. The Federal water project, operated by Interior's Water and Power Resources Service, blocked access to over 100 miles of fishery habitat. Since that time surveys indicate that remaining fishery habitat has been reduced by 80 to 90 percent, primarily from excessive stream sedimentation and inadequate streamflow. Logging, road construction, and heavy fish harvest rates have also contributed to fishery losses.

Fishery experts believe that intensive streambed and watershed rehabilitation, combined with increased streamflow, are the only hope for preventing the fish from becoming extinct in the river system. Good chinook and steelhead runs also will greatly benefit the Hupa and Yurok peoples who depend upon these fish for their ceremonial and subsistence needs and for commercial purposes. Indian fishing on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation has been regulated since 1977 by the Department of the Interior, which placed a moratorium on commercial fishing in 1979 and 1980 to ensure adequate fall chinook spawner escapement.

The Trinity River historically has supported major runs of chinook salmon and steelhead trout, contributing between one-third and one-half of the total number of salmon originating from the Klamath River Basin. The river was greatly altered by construction of the complex of dams, storage reservoirs, and hydroelectric power facilities that divert more than one million acre-feet of water annually to irrigate California's Central Valley and to operate four powerplants.

Andrus' decision was based on a December 5, 1980, final environmental impact statement prepared by Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, Water and Power Resources Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Andrus said the Interior agencies will continue to work with a 13-member multiagency task force to complete a long-range fish and wildlife restoration and management program mandated by Congress. In addition, the Fish and Wildlife Service will conduct a 12-year evaluation of the success of increased flows and stream rehabilitation measures in restoring the Trinity River fishery resources.